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Message Text

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17
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 INR-07 SSO-00 INRE-00 PRS-01

EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-10 /054 W
---------- 100474
O 090100Z JUL 75K
FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4162

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BELIZE 404

STADIS//

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS GT BH
SUBJECT: ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF GUATEMALAN AIRCRAFT ACQUISITIONS

REF: STATE 159010

1. SUMMARY. ASSUMING GUATEMALAN ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL AIR-CRAFT BECOMES KNOWN HERE, DEEMED A LIKELY CONTINGENCY, UNFAVOR-ABLE BUT TRANSITORY REACTION OF BELIZEAN PRESS AND PUBLIC SHOULD BE EXPECTED. MORE LASTING AND MORE SERIOUS MIGHT BE THE REACTION OF PREMIER PRICE AND GOB WHO MIGHT INTERPRET IT AS DECISION BY US, IN RESPONSE TO INITIAL INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS IN UK-GUATEMALA TALKS, TO TILT IN FAVOR OF GUATEMALA BY STRENGTHENING LATTER'S PARATROOP ATTACK CAPABILITY. END OF SUMMARY.

2. LIKELIHOOD OF LEAKS. GOG AIRCRAFT ACQUISITIONS DISCUSSED IN REFTEL MAY ESCAPE NOTICE HERE; HOWEVER, WITH OPPOSITION LEADER-SHIP AND PRESS ACTIVELY SEEKING ISSUES ON WHICH TO ATTACK PREMIER PRICE AND HIS GOVERNMENT, THE MORE LIKELY CONTINGENCY WOULD SEEM TO BE THAT SOONER OR LATER THE NEWS WILL LEAK OUT. THIS IS THE ASSUMPTION ON WHICH THIS ASSESSMENT IS PREDICATED.

3. ANTICIPATED REACTION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC. IN PRESENT ATMOS-PHERE OF HEIGHTENED POPULAR APPREHENSION AS TO WHAT CURRENT UK-GUATEMALA TALKS MAY PORTEND FOR BELIZE, CHANCES THAT STORY WOULD RECEIVE BALANCED, RESPONSIBLE TREATMENT APPEAR NEGLIGIBLE. OFF-CONFIDENTIAL

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SETTING THIS TO SOME EXTENT IS THE RELATIVELY LOW CREDIBILITY OF

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THE BELIZEAN PRESS IN THE EYES OF THE BETTER EDUCATED ELEMENTS OF THENEOPULACE. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK THE NET EFFECT WOULD BE TO RAISE THE PRESENT LEVEL OF PUBLIC NERVOUSNESS A NOTCH OR TWO. THE OPPOSITION WOULD SEE TO THAT.

4. ANTICIPATED REACTION TO OPPOSITION. DURING RECENT VISIT OF ARA/CEN DIRECTOR LAZAR, OPPOSITION LEADER DEAN LINDO AND HIS PRINCIPAL LIEUTENANTS, SENATOR KEN TILLETT AND BELIZE CITY MAYOR PAUL RODRIGUEZ EXPLICITLY EXPRESSED THEIR AWARENESS AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THEY REGARDED AS THE FUNDAMENTAL PREMISE OF US POLICY IN REGARD THE BELIZE DISPUTE, NAMELY, (AND DESPITE OUR PROTESTATIONS TO THE CONTRARY) THAT WE FAVORED GUATEMALA. THIS THEY VIEWED AS AN ENTIRELY NATURAL PREFERENCE IN VIEW OF OUR VASTLY LARGER ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN GUATEMALA AND CONSE-QUENTLY THEY BORE NO ILL WILL TOWARD THE US BECAUSE OF IT. (THIS MAGNANIMITY SHOULD NOT, I SUBMIT, BE CONSIDERED A PERMA-NENT PLANK IN THE UDP'S PLATFORM.) THERE HAS, IN FACT, BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT ANTI-US CONTENT IN CURRENT UDP ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN AGAINST PRICE. WE ARE, HOWEVER, A FAVORITE TARGET OF BELIZE'S BLACK POWER NEWSPAPER "AMANDALA" AND ITS SMALL COTERIE OF BACKERS. NONE OF THESE, IN MY OPINION WOULD STOP SHORT OF MAXIMUM EXPLOITATION OF THE POLITICAL ADVANTAGES TO BE GAINED BY DECRYING THE BUILD-UP OF GUATEMALA'S PARATROOP ATTACK CAPABILITY AND INEVITABLY THE US ROLE IN THIS BUILDUP.

5. ESTIMATED GOB VIEW OF US POLICY. WE COULD RIDE OUT THE RE-ACTION OF BELIZEAN PRESS, PUBLIC AND OPPOSITION WITHOUT TOO MUCH DISCOMFORT, BUT REACTION OF PRICE AND HIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE MORE LASTING AND MORE TROUBLESOME. THAT PRICE SEES GUATEMALA'S PARATROOP ATTACK CAPABILITY (OBVIOUSLY TARGETED AT BELIZE, HE BELIEVES) AS THE ULTIMATE DETERRENT TO A UNILATERAL ASSERTION OF INDEPENDENCE HE MIGHT OTHERWISE CONSIDER MAKING WAS MADE CLEAR TO ME AT OUR FIRST MEETING IN FEBRUARY 1974. THAT THIS CAPA-BILITY IS A PRODUCT OF US POLICY IS REGARDED BY PRICE AND HIS GOVERNMENT AS SELF-EVIDENT, GIVEN FACT THAT PARATROOP BATTALION IS US-TRAINED AND US-EQUIPPED. THE ASSERTION THAT US POLICY RE THE UK-GUATEMALA DISPUTE IS TO ENCOURAGE THE PARTIES TO REACH AGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES WAS MET WITH OBVIOUS DISBELIEF WHEN I FIRST PROPOUNDED IT TO THE PREMIER. MORE RECENTLY, RELATIONS HAVE IMPROVED TO THE POINT WHERE HE LAUGHINGLY ACCEPTS THIS LINE
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BUT ONLY AS A EUPHEMISTIC ADMISSION THAT OUR LEFT HAND DOES NOT

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EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-10 /054 W
---------- 100517
O 090100Z JUL 75
FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4163

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BELIZE 404

STADIS//

KNOW WHAT OUR RIGHT HAND IS DOING. THE FORMULA FOR SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE WHICH HE SUGGESTED TO LAZAR AND ME, ONLY SUPERFICIALLY IN JEST, WAS FOR THE US SIMPLY TO ANNOUNCE THAT HENCEFORTH WE WOULD REGARD BELIZE AS INDEPENDENT. THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT HE BELIEVES WE WOULD PREFER A PROLONGATION OF THE STATUS QUO, AND OF COURSE HE IS RIGHT. BUT I THINK HE HAS AT LEAST COME AROUND TO CONCEDING THAT WE ARE NOT ACTIVELY OUT TO DO HIM IN.

6. ANTICIPATED REACTION OF PREMIER AND GOB. MY CONCERN IS THAT PRICE AND HIS GOVERNMENT MAY INTERPRET NEW GOG AIRCRAFT ACQUISITIONS FROM US AND ISRAEL (THEY WILL NEVER BELIEVE ARAVA'S WERE SOLD TO GOG WITHOUT US APPROVAL) AS A CONSCIOUS US DECISION, TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO INITIAL INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS IN TALKS, TO TILT IN FAVOR OF GUATEMALA. PRICE IS PROBABLY BEGINNING TO FEAR THAT HIS TIME AS LEADER OF THE BELIZE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT MAY BE RUNNING OUT. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE ALSO SEES SOME INDICATION, AS WE DO, OF A NEW INTEREST ON THE PART OF BOTH GOG AND HMG IN REACHING AN AGREEMENT. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD BE BITTER INDEED IF THEY THOUGHT US DECISION TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL TROOP CARRYING AIRCRAFT, THEREBY STRENGTHENING GUATEMALA'S BARGAINING POSITION, WAS RELATED TO CURRENT UK-GUATEMALA TALKS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT FORM PRICE'S IRE MIGHT TAKE. CONCEIVABLY, HE MIGHT TRY TO TURN THIS INTO A DOMESTIC POLITICAL WINDFALL BY PUBLICLY DENOUNCING US POLICY AND BY ELICITING A SIMILAR PROTEST IN UN BY A
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SYMPATHETIC MEMBER COUNTRY. BUT, IN ANY CASE, UNLESS SOME WAY

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COULD BE DEVISED OF DISABUSING HIM IN ADVANCE OF ANY NOTION THAT OUR ACQUIESCENCE IN GUATEMALAN AIRCRAFT ACQUISITION IS RELATED TO OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD TALKS, WE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE AN UNHAPPY PREMIER TO DEAL WITH FROM NOW ON. EVEN IF WE WERE TO SUCCEED IN CONVINCING HIM WE HAD NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE IN APPROVING ADDITIONAL TROOP CARRYING AIRCRAFT FOR GUATEMALA, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE THE REASONS GIVEN BY GOG FOR REQUESTING THEM. FURTHERMORE, IF BRITISH WERE TO BEEF UP THEIR FORCES AS SUGGESTED BY LOCAL COMMANDER, SITUATION SIMILAR TO CRISIS OF 1972 MIGHT BE THE OUTCOME.

7. AM INTERPRETING STADIS INDICATOR AS SUGGESTION THAT I LEAVE TO DEPARTMENT'S DISCRETION WHETHER THIS TELEGRAM SHOULD BE REPEATED TO USUAL INFORMATION ADDRESSEES. GAWF

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